

January 11, 2015

To the Honorable Members of the
Illinois House of Representatives,
98th General Assembly:

In accordance with Article IV, Section 9(b), of the Illinois Constitution, I hereby veto House Bill 4226 from the 98th General Assembly.

House Bill 4226 amends the Wildlife Code authorizing the Director of the Department of Natural Resources to allow a bobcat hunting season to be set annually between November 1 and February 15.

This legislation would reverse Illinois' nearly 40 year old prohibition on bobcat hunting.

Bobcats are native to Illinois and thrived here for many years. Beginning in the mid-1800s, the bobcat population declined primarily due to habitat loss and increasing harvest for the fur trade. Bobcat population had declined so precipitously that the species was added to Illinois' threatened species list in 1977.

Since 1977, the Bobcat population in Illinois has grown thanks to prudent and timely intervention by State government.

This welcome development, however, is no grounds for complacency. Reinstating bobcat hunting may well cause a precipitous decline in bobcat population, erasing the progress of the last four decades.

As the opponents of this legislation have pointed out, humans do not rely on bobcats as a source of food. Nor can reinstating hunting of the species be justified as necessary for human safety. These mammals—that typically weigh anywhere from 25 to 40 pounds—are reclusive, avoiding human contact.

Finally, reducing the population of bobcats poses a significant threat to the State's ecosystem because the indigenous bobcat is an apex predator. To subject the species to indiscriminate killing for recreational amusement presents many serious risks and costs without much in return.

In conclusion, policy of prohibiting the hunting of bobcats has served Illinois – both its human citizens and its quadruped residents—well.

Accordingly, I must return this bill without my approval. Therefore, pursuant to Article IV, Section 9(b) of the Illinois Constitution of 1970, I hereby return House Bill 4226, entitled “AN ACT concerning wildlife.”, with the foregoing objections, vetoed in its entirety.

Sincerely,

PAT QUINN
Governor